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yam, maize, and early millet are not grown everywhere; special crops are cultivated on marsh-land and inland farms; and besides, there is the large population of Nupe which does not live on the land and can obtain its food only from the markets of the country. The Nupe agricultural system, as we have realized already, is adjusted essentially to a highly developed system of exchange and marketing. The surprisingly small number of crops grown exclusively for household consumption is perhaps the most striking proof.

The degree to which the individual farmer, and the farmer in the different districts of the country, adjusts his planting to the principle of exchange economy varies considerably. In the marshes of Niger and Kaduna almost the whole production of rice is intended for sale and export. But at the other end of the scale we find farmers who, able to cultivate a few crops only, have just enough to provide food for their families. We have already examined some of the conditions determining this changing balance between trade crops and food crops. Ultimately it only reflects that greater fundamental balance that underlies Nupe peasant economy: between the need of food for the group, and the need of commodities which are obtainable only by means of exchange, that is, money—which can itself be obtained only from the sale of farming produce.

TREE CULTIVATION AND FRUIT INDUSTRY

As stated in the first chapter, most of the fruit-bearing trees in Nupe are wild growing. Only two or three kinds are cultivated: the kola-nut tree, *ebi*, and to much lesser extent the banana, *yaba*; to these two indigenous plants we must add to-day the European imported mango tree, *mangoro*. In the case of trees the main productive activities refer therefore not so much to the planting and tending of the plants as to the collection of the fruits and the preliminary manufacturing process of the same order as that described in the preceding section. Only in a few cases can the fruits of the trees be utilized directly—for food, cooking, or marketing. Most fruits have to undergo a special 'refining' process before they become marketable or ready for use.

Banana

Only in Bida, Patigi, and Laboži did I see real banana plantations. They are small and of little importance, for bananas have little commercial value in Nupe; they are sold for an extremely low price (a bunch of about twenty for ½*d.* or less)—if they are sold at all. Bananas are eaten raw, and play in Nupe a part comparable to our occasional eating of fruit. In the banana plantations the plants are arranged in a circle of about 6 feet in diameter. The important thing is to plant them very deep in the ground (from 3 to 4 feet), and the whole circle has thus to be excavated to that depth. It is this heavy and slow work—unprofitable work from a commercial point of view—that, according to my informants, discourages the Nupe farmer from growing bananas. In Bida, where the soil is poor, the banana plot has to be manured with animal dung; in the bush plantations and in the forest groves where the banana grows wild the

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leaves are allowed to fall off and rot on the ground—an efficient system of natural fertilization, though not, apparently (unlike the 'green manuring' practised in agriculture), applied consciously. 246

Kola-nut

We have had occasion already to speak of the Kusopa, the kola-nut planters in the forest groves of Laboži. The Kusopa of Laboži and the neighbouring districts devote the larger part of their agricultural work to the cultivation of the kola-nut tree, growing little else besides—only a little millet and sorghum. The method of kola-nut cultivation is interesting. The trees are planted at the beginning of the rains. They flower for the first time after five years, about July, and after six years bear fruit, towards the end of October. The fruit is picked in February. From every harvest a gourdful of nuts is kept to be used as seeds, for nearly every year new trees are planted to replace old and barren ones. When planting a new tree the seed is buried hand-deep in the ground. To protect the seed the place where it was planted is covered with twigs; moreover, four banana plants are planted around it, in a square, about 6 feet by 6 feet. As the banana grows faster than the kola-nut the four banana plants provide shade for the tender young tree, and at the same time secure the necessary distance between newly planted trees. When the kola-nut tree reaches a certain height and no longer needs the shade of the banana plants, the latter are dug out and removed. The tending of the young kola-nut tree involves constant weeding—in which no hoe is used; only the 'bush-knife', so as not to hurt the delicate plant—and much watering. During the dry season the seedlings must be watered every four days. The need for humid soil explains the fact that the kola thrives only in the most humid part of Nupe, in the thick forest groves of Kusopa country.

This environmental factor is fully understood by the people. The failure of kola-nut cultivation in other districts of the Emirate (on which we shall have more to say presently) is partly attributed to the less favourable soil. But the traditional monopoly of kola-nut planting in Laboži is not, in their eyes, fully explained on such empirical grounds. A legend that has grown up round the cultivation of the kola-nut tree which tells about the discovery, by a Laboži woman, of the secret of kola-nut planting, supplies another explanation more convincing to their way of thinking. Let me quote this legend in full.

A woman was threshing grain for beer when a Hausa from Borgu, on his way back to his country, happened to pass. He crossed the threshing-ground and put down the load he was carrying. The woman went into the house to fetch water and to cook porridge for the guest. She brought the food and gave it to the Hausa. He ate the porridge and liked it very much. He opened his load, took out two kola-nuts, and gave them to the woman to thank her for the food. At that time there were no kola-nuts anywhere in Nupe country. The woman took the kola-nuts and put them on the threshing-ground. Later, when she took the grain into the house, she forgot the kola-nuts and left them lying there on the threshing-ground. One day, when she came out to the threshing-ground again, she saw these kola-nuts. She said: 'Look, the nuts which the Hausa gave me have come 245 539

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245 539 up.' She went and told the men of the house. They all came and looked. They cleared the ground around the young plants; they had two kola-nut trees then. After three years the trees bore fruit. The men picked the fruits and took them home. They broke the nuts open and ate them. They picked out the kernel, took it into the bush and planted it. When the kola-nut trees bore fruit again the men picked the fruits and took them to the king. This was the beginning of the kola-nut in Nupe. When they had taken the fruits to the king, he said: 'They are very nice indeed.' But the following year the trees did not bear fruit. So the men went to see the soothsayers. They said that the trees would not bear fruit again unless they sacrificed a human being. So the men went and told the king, and said: 'If we do not sacrifice a human being our trees will never bear fruit again.' Therefore the king gave them permission to take a human being and sacrifice it. They did so, and the trees bore fruit again. This was the beginning of human sacrifices in Nupe, with the permission of the king.

245 As the legend explains the origin of kola plantation in the country of the Kusopa, certain magic rites which are practised by that group—and by that group only—emphasize the unique position of the kola-nut planters. Only with the knowledge of that special magic can the success of the difficult and precarious cultivation be assured. The Laboži people practise two kinds of this professional magic. At the time when the kola trees are in bloom every planter will collect the dead leaves on his plantation, place them in a mortar, and pound and then burn them on the plantation. There is no spell or special ritual linked with this act, but by it, as by a magic act, the planter believes he will ensure a rich harvest. The second magic connected with kola-nut planting is performed for the whole group by the *Majĭ Tsuba*, the Master of Threshing (in the legend the first kola-nuts were growing from the threshing-ground), the village priest of Laboži. Annually, about two months before the picking of the [182] kola-nuts, he performs a sacrifice in front of the hut in which, as the legend has it, the woman lies buried to whom the Kusopa owe the knowledge of kola-nut planting. To-day a white ram and cock are sacrificed, the blood together with some beer is poured on the threshold of the hut, and *Sokó*, God, is invoked that he may let the kola trees thrive. Formerly this sacrifice is said to have demanded a human victim. (See p. 90, n. 2.)

This connexion between planting technique and mythical and magic ideas, common all the world over, needs no special explanation. But in the case of the kola-nut planters it gains an additional significance. The special nature of the rite, its infrequent occurrence, correspond to the special monopolized technique. In the eyes of the people who, not kola-nut planters themselves, accept the existence of these special rites, it confirms and endorses the exceptional position of the Kusopa as the masters of a unique craft. About fifteen years ago the Administration planned to introduce the cultivation of kola-nuts into the other districts of Nupe. A few expert planters from Laboži were sent round to teach the farmers in places where the soil looked promising the almost secret art of kola planting. These efforts met with but meagre success. Local conditions were to a large extent responsible: the soil in the other districts seemed capable of producing only the inferior kind of kola, and

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frequently the trees bore no fruit at all. But to some extent the failure of the experiment was due to psychological factors. The lack of interest in their trees which these novices in kola-nut planting still display reveals the lack of incentive for the adoption of this new, difficult, and lengthy enterprise, officially encouraged though it was. The adoption of the new cultivation ran counter to a century-old specialization and monopoly, to an organization of production which, firmly rooted in legends and religious practice, has come to be accepted by the people as part and parcel of that inert, unalterable, entity: their culture—a point to which we shall return.

Locust-bean Tree

This is one of the most important trees in Nupe. It grows both inside the town and in the open bush. Every part of its fruit is utilized. The pods (*elo*) are sold, in large basketfuls in the markets of Bida. Both the whole fruits and the empty skins are marketed. The infusion of the skins, a black sticky liquid (*longoro* in Nupe, *màkuba* in Hausa), is used as dye for pottery, leather and woodwork, also as ink, and for staining and making ant-proof timber-rafters, walls, and floors; it gives them that neat polished appearance as if they had been treated with tar. A yellow powder found inside the pods (*elo nuwã*) is used to sweeten milk, water, and other drinks. The fermented seeds (*elo kosũ*), pounded and kneaded into small flat cakes (*kula*), are sold on the markets; strongly tasting, and even more strongly smelling, they form an indispensable ingredient of Nupe cooking, being used to flavour practically every dish. The fruits of the locust-bean tree are plucked by the women, with the help of long poles which have a forked piece of wood, almost like a pair of shears, tied to the top.

Shea-nut Tree

No less important than the locust-bean tree, the shea-nut tree grows wild everywhere in the thin bush country. The picking of the fruits is again women's work. Small groups of women go out together, help each other, and eventually divide the fruits which they have gathered. The women rarely stray very far from roads and paths, and never into the uninhabited bush. The fruit, *ekó*, is either sold to the trading-companies or manufactured by the women themselves into shea-butter, an important fat in Nupe cooking, and an important commodity in the markets of the country. The shea-nuts intended for export are first dried in the sun or in the roast-ovens described above. Shea-butter (*emikote*) is prepared in the following fashion:

After having been dried thoroughly, the nuts are shelled by hand. As a rule this lengthy work is left for one day, and next morning the inner, finer skin is peeled off and the nuts are pounded in a mortar to a coarse-grained flour. Plenty of water is added, and the dough is kneaded with hands and feet for a whole day. In the evening the preparation is covered and left standing overnight. On the next day the dough is transferred into a big clay pot. A little water is added and the pot put on the fire, where it is left boiling for the whole day. During the boiling the pure fat comes to

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the surface; it is skimmed and placed in another pot, where it hardens to shea-butter. The residue of the pure fat is used as a fuel for the Nupe clay lamps.

Oil-palm

This grows in the thick groves near watercourses and, covering a larger area, in the dense forest country round Yeti, in the north of Nupe, which is inhabited by the Kusopa, the Keepers of the Forest. The Kusopa of Yeti are accorded a position somewhat similar to that of the kola-nut planters of Laboži. They too are regarded as 'experts' from most ancient times, and their chief holds the title *Yikunu Dzuru*, 'Oil-palm', as a symbol of his tribe's close association with the tree.[1] But they are 'experts' on a much smaller scale and claim no monopoly with regard to the products of their trees. Moreover the palm-oil produced in Kusopa country plays an unimportant part in the economy of Nupe at large. It contributes only very little towards the needs of the country, and palm-oil has to be imported regularly—and has most probably been so imported for centuries—from the south, i.e. the great oil-producing countries in the forest belt. The export of palm-kernels from the Emirate is negligible. The fruits of the palm-tree are plucked by the men, who climb up the trees with the help of a hoop made of supple boughs, and throw the fruits on the ground. They are later collected by the women. The manufacture of oil from the palm-kernels is women's work.

The kernels of about twenty fruits are extracted and then boiled in water for one day. They are left to cool overnight. Next morning they are placed in a mortar, and the women knead the soft mass by treading on it. Later, cold water is poured over it, and a first oil comes to the surface. It is skimmed and boiled again, in another pot. The oil which now appears on the surface is the pure palm-oil, *emi dzuru* (lit. red oil). The residue is dried in the sun, later kneaded again in a mortar, and finally boiled. From this boiling a second, less pure, oil is extracted, called *edi*. Twenty palm-fruits give two small pots of pure palm-oil (about 4 gallons).

Palm-oil plays an important part in the Nupe household; the pure palm-oil is the chief ingredient in all soups and sauces which are eaten with the universal Nupe dish porridge-and-fish and porridge-and-meat. The less pure oil, which is gained as a second extract, is used for cooking yam, potatoes, and beans, but also serves—a rather indiscriminate ingredient—as a hair-lotion, ointment, laxative, and lamp-oil. On the Nupe markets only the pure 'red' oil, not the whole fruit nor the less pure second extract, is offered for sale.

As palm-oil is also used in the preparation of native soap we may add the description of this process; it is again women's work. Water is filtered through hot wood ashes, collected in a pot and boiled. In another pot a bowlful of palm-oil has been prepared. To this an equal amount of boiling ash-water is added. The mixture is again boiled, and is constantly stirred till it hardens. This mass is left to cool, and is afterwards kneaded into large balls. The quality of the soap depends on the purity of the oil used.

[1] The Kusopa of Yeti are also said to 'cultivate' the oil-palm. What this term implies in reality, and how far it refers to real tending of the trees, weeding, thinning out, &c., I cannot say, not having been to Yeti myself.

[i.e. of the shea-nut rendering—Analyst]

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owned twenty-five indigo trees had to take their produce to Ilorin market just at the time of the second yam harvest. However, they preferred to sell indigo first and to postpone the digging out of yam for a month or two, although this meant losing the always profitable market for the first yams of the season. The element of economic calculation, to which we have already assigned its place in the planning of Nupe agriculture, reveals its efficacy in this new context as well.

Not much need be said about the other fruit-bearing trees. The fruit of the mango tree is eaten when and wherever it can be picked or gathered up from the ground; it is not traded—like the banana it is 'just fruit'. The tender young leaves of the baobab (*muci*) are used as food; they are pounded and sold in the markets as a vegetable which is added to soup and meat. In order to obtain the tender leaves the owner of the tree lops the big branches so as to make them sprout new leaves. The cotton-wool-like kapok which is contained in the capsules of the silk-cotton tree (*lembubu*) is traded in one or two markets of the country; it is bought by the Bida cushion-makers and also by the canoe-men on the Niger, who use its fine fibres to stop leaks in their canoes. The commercial use of this tree and its fruits has not yet penetrated into the more remote districts: while in Kutigi, on the main road, natives were collecting kapok to sell it to the Bida cushion-makers, I found in Sakpe, only ten miles away but right in the bush, the cotton-wool left unused, lying on the ground to be carried away by the wind. When I asked a number of men why they did not collect it and take it to the market—I could call upon a boy from Bida whom I had with me to bear out my contention that this stuff possessed commercial value—they replied, not wholly convinced, that it would be too hard work. Another example of rudimentary 'economic calculation', with leisure weighed against money-profit.

INNOVATIONS IN PRODUCTION

From this discussion an interesting question arises: why have the Nupe, who have mastered the cultivation of kola-nut and banana, not taken to the cultivation of other trees as well, but left most of their fruit-bearing trees to the 'care of God'. If you ask a Nupe farmer he will give you one of two answers: either the vague theological excuse that God has planted the trees, and that God will look after them; or the more rationalistic but no less acquiescent explanation: 'If I planted a tree I should never see its fruit, only my grandchildren would profit by it. Our grandfathers have not planted trees for us, why then should we plant for our grandchildren?' The fact, well known to everyone, that the Kusopa plant and cultivate trees is yet easily dismissed. This is one of the cultural features typical of certain tribal sections which are simply taken for granted by the other groups. The myth that explains how it came about that just this and no other sub-tribe happened to become kola-nut planters, the special magic which the members of that sub-tribe are believed to own provide the spiritual background for this attitude. This acceptance of an existing productive specialization as if it were a final and unalterable fact was effective enough, as we have seen,

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to check the attempts to extend kola plantation in Nupe. Whether or not it will check other attempts at agricultural innovations one cannot say.[1]

Often in discussions of this kind the reluctance of a native group to adopt a certain innovation is summarily dismissed as being due to the inveterate, almost proverbial, 'conservatism' of the native races. Clearly, such an explanation does not meet the case. As regards the Nupe we should have to contrast their alleged 'conservatism' with respect to trees with the readiness with which they adopt new crops and agricultural techniques. Evidently, to adopt a new crop which shows results in a year's time, and which is easy to tend, often easier than the traditional crops (as in the case of maize or cassava), and to take up the difficult work of planting trees which may not bear fruit for six or seven years, is an entirely different thing. One can be easily fitted into the framework of established agricultural activities while the other involves a complete readjustment of the productive system. The Nupe are, within limits, extremely progressive people, and keen on trying out new things. These limits are determined by two factors: first, by the time that an ordinarily crowded working year could allow for additional tasks; other work, or precious leisure time might have to be given up for the sake of the innovation—a change that may or may not appear worth while to the Nupe farmer. The second factor is the measure of change which a readjustment of the native production would entail in this closely knit economic system, with its exact balance of specialization and exchange. Every radical change in the production, such as the adoption of tree-cultivation in a district, may upset this balance; it may, in other words, make the innovation less profitable. The fact that the Nupe farmer is go-ahead with respect to certain farm techniques and 'conservative' with respect to others is not due to any tribal or racial 'conservatism', but reveals itself as a clear instance of the working of free economic choice.

TECHNIQUE AND KNOWLEDGE

So advanced a technique and so conspicuous a standard of husbandry must involve a body of theoretical knowledge which goes far beyond the counsels of peasant lore, and could avouch statements of very nearly scientific authority. This is no doubt the case in Nupe farming. The understanding of the basic principle of manuring, the fixed rules with regard to rotation and lying fallow, the practice of thinning-out the growing plants, which is correctly explained as being intended to give the plant more space, they all confirm this.[2] Moreover, while in many African

[1] Rev. Ira W. Sherk, the head of the U.S. Mission at Mokwa, has been successful in making the people of a small neighbouring village adopt the cultivation of grapefruit. This innovation, carried out on a very small scale, and involving hardly any difficult readjustment of the native productive organization, bears out what is said later in the text about the limits that are set to all such innovations.

[2] I must record that one of my Bida informants, an experienced farmer, denied the value of ashes and the burning of fields as manure. He held that animal manure (with the regular use of which he as a Bida farmer was well acquainted) was the only effective manure. This critical attitude only emphasizes the element of empirical knowledge in Nupe farming technique.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

184 yams, where beans and other crops may also be sown. In Lanwa[5] yams and
241 guinea-corn are planted on the same plot in alternate years, but where the land is less exhausted yams and cotton may be planted together on the same plot. In Kakanda yams were hardly grown at all when Meek was writing (1917),[6] and guinea-corn was the staple.

241 Two types of millet—bulrush millet and "late" millet—are widely grown. Besides being staple crops, these are the only grains which may be used for ritual offerings. Cassava, introduced by the Hausa since 1910, is of minor importance and is grown during the dry season following the rice crop on irrigated land. Two varieties of rice are grown and practically all of it goes to the south as a cash crop. Onions are grown after rice in the river marshes.[7]

Within the settlements, house plots, often tended by old men, are cultivated, the main crops being green vegetables, beans, sorrel, red peppers, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, and hemp. Sugar-cane, rice, and bananas are grown on the strips of marsh running through Bida town.[8]

The Bataci and Kyedye sub-tribes, who are mainly canoe-men and fishermen, have more recently been paying greater attention to agriculture. They grow catch crops of maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and rice on their small marshland farms. There are generally two harvests each year, crops being planted as the Niger floods recede. Deep-water rice seed was asked for by a large number of Kede District inhabitants for cultivation when fishing was slack. Round Muregi rice has recently been introduced.[9]

25! Some crops (yams, sweet potatoes, etc.) are stored on the farm; others in homestead granaries (*edo*). Millet and sorghum are stored unthreshed; bulrush millet may have to be dried in an oven before storing. Crops for export are not stored.

242 The Government established 17 mixed farms around Bida Emirate during 1937–40. Each was about 12 acres and was equipped initially with a plough and two bulls, and employed two labourers.[10]

● 245 The soil and climate are not, on the whole, conducive to successful tree cultivation, except in the forest area west of the Kaduna River, where considerable initiative has been shown in tree-planting. The only trees to be cultivated are the citrus and mango (recent introductions) and the banana. With the exception of the oil-palm and kola, the produce of all trees is collected by women. Kola-nuts are collected by men; the produce of the oil-palm is divided between the occupier of the land and the chief of the town. Trees growing on farms are left standing and not cut down.

The banana is cultivated only round Bida, Pategi, and Labozhi. Kola (*ebi*) is grown mainly by the Kusopa of Labozhi and its cultivation is a long and difficult process. The locust-bean grows well in the town and open bush and is one of the most important trees in Nupe. The skins of the bean are used for dye and for ink, the powder in the pods for sweetening, while the seeds are an indispensable ingredient of Nupe cooking. The shea-nut grows wild in thin bush country; it is picked by the women, who also extract the fat (shea-butter). Even remote hamlets have
[439] their shea-kilns and the shea-nut is the main cash crop, 75% being sold as dried nuts for export. It is little used locally, except for lamp-oil. The oil-palm grows
249 near watercourses and in the dense forest near Yeti. The extraction of the oil is women's work as is the manufacture of soap from the oil. The oil is most important in Nupe cooking but not in external exchange. Indigo grows wild but is occasionally
[439 cultivated in two forms, grass and tree. Men make and use dye from the grass and
336] women that procured from the trees. It is traded to Yoruba.

[5] Davies, 1920.
[6] 1917.
[7] Nadel, 1942, pp. 205–7.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[10] Notes on Bida Emirate, 1936.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922
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634 the Isaji, who are now distributed over the Pateji Division of Ilorin Province, Kontagora Province, and the Bida Emirate, having been dispersed at the beginning of the nineteenth century from G'bara (now Jimunli); and the Gwagbaji who fled from Jengi near Rabba, north to Kontagora Province on the Filane aggression. They are now to be found in the Zuguma District, in Yelwa north-west of N'Gaski, and in the Bussa District below Wawa. They are described as a very dark race, good looking and well built.

[304] The tribal marks[1] consist of a scar on one cheek, stretching from the nose to the corner of the mouth. Some people, in addition, wear three small cuts at each corner of the mouth, and three small cuts on the chin. They practise circumcision.

The Nupe of Duchu, a town south of the Kaduna river, on the western angle of the Bako and Niger rivers, are talakawa to the Nupe. They are pagans and hold the "echu" snake [771] (probably a python) as sacred. This snake is said to emerge from the bush whenever it is wanted, which is always on the birth of a child, for a mother may not suckle her infant until the "echu" has touched her breasts.

The Ebe are settled in the Yelwa District of Kontagora, but are now almost extinct. They speak Haussa, as well as [364] a dialect of Nupe. They practise circumcision. Their tribal mark is a scar on each cheek from the nose to the corner of the mouth.

Etsu is the name given to a group of Gboda, Kupari, and Gbangiri from Kukuruku (Kabba Province), and Yoruba, who settled in the Sapke District and built the town of Etsu, becoming naturalised Nupe.

634 "Kuso" is the Nupe word for a kola plantation and
771 "Kusopa" means "the man who guards the kola trees."
775 They live in the Labohzi District, an area celebrated for its
[245] kola trees, and a place where palm-oil flourishes, in the south-west of the province. They are pagans. They believe that each individual lives four times, in different existences of which this is the second. They believe that this life is an improvement on the last, where all people were very big and thickly made. In the next life they believe that people will be very tall, but thin, and in the fourth and last life that they will be tiny people, only one or two feet in height. This fourth phase comes at the end of the world when everybody has died, and it is regarded as a heaven, but it is not permanent, being followed by extinction. It is only the good people who can attain to it, as the wicked become bush-beasts. It is not clear whether they believe that the soul is immediately translated to the succeeding sphere or not, but they appear to think that a period of death comes between each phase.

[1] [i.e. Of the Bini subtribe.- Analyst]